

An Examination of Employee Turnover and Retention Initiatives in the Homecare Industry

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the Master's in Business Administration through National
College of Ireland

Derek Conway

X18131778

MBA2

Dissertation

An Examination of Employee Turnover and Retention Initiatives in the Homecare Industry

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Declaration

Submission of Dissertation

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1.0 Executive Summary/Abstract

Homecare organisations in Ireland are going through a difficult phase due to the increase in demand for their services and a lack of interested applicants for roles of healthcare assistants, meaning they can't capitalise on opportunities to increase revenue. There are a number of reasons this is the case including government policies towards the delivery of homecare, the lack of eligible candidates, and the inability to implement Employee Retention strategies to an extent that employer retains its employees at a rate that would allow them to deliver care safely.

Employee retention is the term used to measure the rate at which an organisation can keep their human capital employed for (CIPD, 2021). A successful retention strategy, in theory, will aid organisations increase the length of service of their employees, and further allow the organisation to focus corporate goals.

In the homecare sector, organisations have traditionally invested time and money to understand what its clients need in order to create and successfully deliver services and products to the market. Once understood, organisations and their agents must then attract, recruit, train and retain employees to deliver these services and products.

Prior to 2020, Ireland had seen record low levels of unemployment in Ireland (CSO, 2021), as well as an increase in demand for a dwindling pool of candidates, meaning a supply issue was created, which made a "buyers' market" for job hunters, which meant organisations needed to work harder and leaders in the organisation needed to learn how to keep employees.

This significant shift in the employment market created a gap for motivated and skilled health care assistants, whereas previously with a limited number of competitors, the main operators could easily recruit and train employees, retention was not an issue. As other entrepreneurs identified the homecare industry as a growth market, two of Porter's forces come in to play- The number and power of a company's competitive rivals and potential new market entrants, (Porter, 1979) more competition came in to play and the pool of eligible candidates had more options available to them.

Now organisations and leaders must shift focus and investment to better understand what their team members need from their employer in order to remain satisfied in their role, in order to continue to deliver care safely.

This research paper will explore the reasons employees have left their employers in the homecare sector and use this to help identify employee retention initiatives in the homecare sector and propose practicable improvements.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the Study

Retaining Healthcare Assistants is one of the biggest challenges affecting the home care industry at present.

Employee turnover has been the number one limiting factor affecting revenue growth amongst organisations operating in the sector over the past 5 years (HCCI, 2019).

Homecare providers invest significant amounts of capital to replace employees who made the decision to leave their employment every year.

According to Home and Community Care Ireland, organisations lose, on average, 60% of their workforce through voluntary turnover (HCCI, 2019), and the estimated cost of replacing these leavers is €1,200 per recruit (HCCI, 2019).

Demand for home care has increased during the same period and will continue to grow over the coming years (HSE, 2015) in order for organisations to be able to cope with this demand, they must develop effective, sustainable employee retention strategies to slow the rate of which employees leave their employment.

2.2 Background of the Homecare Industry in Ireland

According to The Economic and Social Research Institute report on Healthcare in Ireland, demand for home care in Ireland is expected to increase by up to 54 percent by 2030 (Wren. M, 2017). In the same report, it claims that Homecare packages are projected to show the greatest increase in demand for all healthcare services over this timeframe.

In 2015, 14.3 million hours of homecare were delivered in Ireland, if predictions are correct, this will potentially rise to 22.1 million hours of care annually by 2030. According to Home and Community Care Ireland, the average healthcare assistant working in the homecare sector works 14 hours per week (HCCI, 2019), this means that in order to deliver this care safely, the industry will have to recruit an additional 10,700 employees to service this demand, this is without taking account for the 60% of employees that leave their employment in the interim.

2.3 The Significance of the Study

Traditionally, low paying industries have the highest employee turnover rates of any industry. This is where government policy and Health Service Executive Tender funding of homecare introduces a challenge. While the problems sit with private operators in 2021, as demand continues to rise, and policies regarding funding remain unchanged, employee turnover will become more than an issue for private organisations, and focus will shift to how the government will respond to a future crisis and become a political hot potato.

This research examines the issues of employee turnover in the homecare industry in Ireland with a view to demonstrate how private organisations can respond and implement sustainable retention strategies in order for them to better prepare and combat against potential departures from their industry.

3.0 Literature Review

3.1.1 Employee Turnover

Due to the lack of research into employee retention and turnover in the homecare industry, the researcher expanded the scope of employee turnover to include similar industries, with similar levels of employee turnover with similar terms, such as low barriers to entry, low pay and low security roles, and linked these experiences with those in homecare industry.

Retail and hospitality are generally considered to have low barriers of entry due to the high volume of roles available where there are no pre-requisite of qualifications or experience (Jagun, 2015). Organisations operating in these industries including supermarkets, retailers, hotels, bars and restaurants, also view employee turnover as a critical issue to the successful operation of their business, some reasons proposed for the high rate of employee turnover include- minimal compensation and benefits, poor working conditions and work life balance and work-related stress (Poulston, 2008). Similarly, conditions like these are prevailing in the homecare industry. As such, the aims and objectives of this research project will focus on these headings, both to gain a better understanding of the problem and to propose sustainable, practicable employee retention strategies organisations in the industry can adopt as a potential solution to the issue.

Hom, recognising the challenges of employee turnover examined the reasons why employees leave organisations in 2012, and in *Reviewing Employee Turnover: Focusing on Proximal Withdrawal States and an Expanded Criterion* (Hom, 2012) he introduced the theory of “withdrawal states” that influence decisions around whether someone should leave or stay in employment with their organisation. Hom identified four categories that employees fall into-

- An enthusiastic stayer who, an employee totally engaged with their work, the work of the organisation and with their team will generally stay in employment with their organisation for as long as they can.
- A reluctant stayer, an employee, generally with financial commitments, will only remain in employment with their organisation for as long as is required, or until an easy exit appears, which allows them to take of their financial commitments.
- An enthusiastic leaver is an employee who has become disengaged with their work, the work of the organisation and with their team and wants to and will leave as soon as possible.
- A reluctant leaver, an employee who is generally engaged with their work, the work of the organisation and with their team and wants to remain in employment but must leave the for reasons out of their control.

For the purposes of this research project, the focus initially will be on the enthusiastic leaver and the reluctant leaver and will reference the enthusiastic stayer and reluctant stayer in proposing a sustainable, practicable employee retention strategies organisations in the industry can adopt.

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Bergman researched employee retention also, and produced an article titled *Sometimes Pursuits Don't Pan Out: Anticipated Destinations and Other Caveats*: (Bergman, 2012), which disagreed with Hom's hypothesis on four categories of employees and the effect of these on employee retention and turnover. Bergman's research led him to believe that if organisations are examining their employee turnover, they should also analyse where their employees are planning to depart to, as this will provide a better understanding of the reasoning and trends behind why their employees have made the decision to depart the organisation. Bergman's approach will also be applied in this research paper.

When investigating employee turnover and retention several theories relating to employee satisfaction, attraction, retention and turnover are key to understanding the underlying issues which move employees through the four categories of engagement.

In the journal article titled "Labour supply in the home care industry: A case study in a Dutch region" the homecare industry in the Netherlands was examined (Breedveld, 2006), in this research they applied Porter's 'five forces' (Porter, 1979)- and found useful insights when applying the force of bargaining power of labour suppliers.

Breedveld examined the supply chain of the homecare industry, and noted that, similar to Ireland's current situation, growing demand for the homecare services led to the force of bargaining power of labour suppliers coming out on top, as competitive rivalry between private organisations in the industry influenced movement of labour within the industry through improved compensation and benefits packages.

Elements of this research paper will examine if similar outcomes are demonstrated in the Irish homecare industry, as increasing demand for the service continues, entrepreneurs and other organisations will recognise the opportunity and develop their own homecare organisation, thus increasing competitive forces creating potential for movement of labour within the industry for a higher rate of pay.

3.2.1 Work Environment

Cooman developed the person-organisational (P-O) fit theory (Cooman, 2009), and found that shared values between employer and employee founded at the beginning of the employment relationship helped increase the length of service for each employee. Similarly, Schneider, agreed that potential employees will be attracted to organisations whose values are aligned (Schneider, 1987). In the same journal article by Schneider, titled, "The People Make the Place" where he first published the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model also found that employees whose values don't match their organisations values will leave or be removed by the organisation.

The ASA model and P-O fit will be applied to this research in an effort to develop practicable sustainable strategies to aid in the reduction of employee turnover by questioning leavers on their attraction, recruitment, retention and decision to leave employment.

3.2.2 Career Progression

McGinley published research relating to developing a career change model in hospitality which can be applied to similar industries with low barriers of entry and low compensation and benefits whereby many employees can enter an easy to enter industry with the intention of remaining and building a career (McGinley, 2014). In the homecare industry, there is a lack of clear career progression, as the majority of healthcare assistants that enter the profession and remain is linked to their desire to deliver care to others (HCCI, 2019) as a progressive role within the industry will inevitably lead to a role with lower face time with clients.

In this research we will examine the if healthcare assistants feel that their organisation supports their career goals, and if this is related to employee turnover or aids in retention of employees.

3.2.3 Communication

In 2013, Das conducted research and published his findings in the Journal of Business and Management under the title Employee Retention: A Review of Literature (Das, 2013). In the publication Das concluded that maintain regular communication channels engaged employees and led to them feeling more connected and involved with their organisation and gain a better understanding of the strategic direction of the organisation.

Jones discovered that regular staff meetings, employee newsletters and open communication channels with their line manager and colleagues led to a more engaged team (Jones, 2018).

Noah (Noah, 2008), similar to Vargo's co-creation adds to employee value (Vargo, 2008), found that including employees in decision making creates a sense of belonging and co-creation amongst employees helping to create a workplace where employees feel they are both valued and are adding value, which helps engage them with their roles and organisations even further.

Similarly, lack of communication can leave employees feeling disconnected from their organisation, line manager and team. In this research we will examine the if healthcare assistants feel that their organisation communicates well, and if this is related to employee turnover or aids in retention of employees.

3.2.4 Work-Life Balance

In 2012, Qu authored the journal article Employees' Work-Family Conflict Moderating Life and Job Satisfaction (Qu, 2012), in the article, Qu advised that his research found that Work-life balance makes a significant contribution towards the decision to resign from an organisation. The lack of flexibility around working times in an organisation can be significant cause of dissatisfaction.

In the homecare industry, client health and wellbeing dictates both how and when a client should receive care, and the nature of the work means that flexibility may not always be available for the workforce, particularly so when demand is high, and supply of labour is low.

This research we will examine the if healthcare assistants feel that their organisation offers flexibility, and if this is related to their decision to leave employment or if an organisation has demonstrated flexibility has this aided in objective of retaining employees.

3.2.5 Compensation and Benefits

Armstrong concluded in his book “How to manage people” that rewarding employees makes them feel appreciated and valued and helps them engage more with their organisation (Armstrong, 2008).

Compensation and Benefits systems should be defined by clear policies, practices and procedures, as this plays a significant role in employee retention. Rainlall found that employees who felt they were satisfied and appreciated were more likely to remain engaged with both their work and their organisation (Rainlall, 2004).

Developing a sustainable and equitable compensation and benefits systems will be key in retaining key employees. Due to increased competition in almost all sectors competing for a limited pool of employees the importance of a competitive compensation and benefits system has become increasingly more important in the role of reducing employee turnover.

This research we will examine the if healthcare assistants feel that their organisation offers a competitive compensation and benefits package, if the package makes them feel appreciated and valued and if this is related to their decision to leave employment or if they were satisfied with it has this aided the organisational objective of retaining employees.

3.2.6 Motivation

Maslow’s’ Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) highlighted the importance of satisfying our physiological needs. In order to achieve this, most of the population will need to work to earn an income in order to provide shelter, food etc. In homecare, the vast majority of employees working for private organisations will be working in low-income roles, with no guarantee for the number of hours they can work each week due to the nature of the care delivery of the clients (HCCI, 2019), this is counter intuitive to Maslow’s theory, and doesn’t provide a sustainable feeling of physiological safety, this may move an employee who previously would have been categorised as being an enthusiastic stayer to a reluctant or even an enthusiastic leaver (Hom, 2012) Applying Maslow’s’ Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943) organisations can begin to understand what motivates their employees and why the prospect of an opportunity to earn even a marginally higher income can be attractive.

As the homecare industry has low barriers to entry, many unskilled and untrained candidates can enter the industry with ease, their current compensation and benefits strategy will not help retain employees in the long run and will see organisations in a “catch 22” situation whereby they are constantly refilling a bucket with multiple leakages, and will never get to the root cause of the issue, instead, they continue preparing new entrants to homecare industry, who, when the opportunity arises, after investing heavily in training, will become a future leaver. The researcher aims to evaluate the current strategy, apply the research to devise a practicable solution.

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4.0 Research Objectives

4.1 Aim

This research dissertation will focus on two research objectives.

These objectives will provide information to help organisation operating in the Homecare Industry the reasoning behind their employee turnover and propose a sustainable retention strategy to help reduce employee turnover rates.

4.2 Objectives

4.2.1 Objective 1

Highlight the factors that contribute to the high employee turnover rates within the homecare industry in Ireland by surveying ex-employees of private homecare providers in Ireland.

4.2.2 Objective 2

Identify effective, sustainable employee retention strategies organisations in the homecare industry can implement to help reduce their employee turnover rates

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the research methodology that used in this research project, including, the data collection methods, the research design and the reasoning behind why this methodology was adopted.

This research project is an investigation into the rising rates of employee turnover in the Irish homecare Industry, to help better understand the reasoning for such high departure rates and to help organisations operating in this industry to develop sustainable, impactful employee retention strategies to help improve their employee retention rate.

In order to better understand the issues affecting the high employee turnover rate in the Irish Homecare Industry, the most suitable method of collecting data must be applied so that the researcher will have accurate and reliable data to use in the analysis (Ton, 2008).

Data collection was key in gaining a better understanding of the reasoning of the departures and allowing the researcher to deduce informed results. As Kumar in Research Methodology (Kumar, 2005) advised, the process of gathering this data enabled this researcher access to all information they needed in order to better understand and answer the proposed research question.

As part of the planning process for this research proposal, consideration was given as to whether a quantitative or a qualitative approach would provide the best insight. In order to identify the best approach a review of the research proposal was carried out to help determine what this research proposal required.

5.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is a belief held by a researcher over relevant data to a particular research proposal should be collected, analysed and put into use to deduce informed results. According to Crossan, there are three approaches a researcher could adopt- epistemology, ontology and axiology (Crossan, 2003). Saunders wrote in his book Research Methods for Business Students that Research philosophy refers to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge. (Saunders, 2009).

The epistemology philosophy dictates that the researcher should critically investigate and determine the nature, origin and reasoning of the knowledge possessed, in order to create a distinction between truthful and false aspects of knowledge (Williams, 1995). Saunders also concluded that epistemology involved positivism and realism. (Saunders, 2009).

Ontology focusses on establishing humans and how we interact with the world and similarly has two focusses- objectivism and subjectivism. Saunders advised that objectivism represents the position that social entities exist in reality to the social actor, and that subjectivism represents the view that

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phenomena are created from perception and consequent actions of the social actors (Saunders, 2009) to understand how things come into existence and what are the forces behind their existence.

While axiology studies judgements and value (Saunders, 2009) in order to gain an understanding of the value of something.

Given the nature of the research topic, adopting an epistemology approach towards the research will help retrieve the best possible most accurate data, basing the decision that the decision to leave their organisations these past employees are determined by a reasoning of knowledge they possess (Saunders, 2009).

The researcher believes that this approach will collect the most relevant data.

A quantitative approach was taken during the research, meaning the researcher can gather numbers and statistics in order to analyse statistical data pertaining to the research. Some of the survey questions also require an in-depth description of the information they provide to help us better understand why the number of employees are leaving the Irish Homecare Industry.

A survey administered through SurveyMonkey was the strategy adopted to gather this feedback. SurveyMonkey allows the user to collect large amounts of data in an economical way (Saunders, 2009). Surveys are often used by administering a questionnaire and it is perceived by people as easy to explain and understand (Saunders, 2009).

5.3 Data Collection Method

Data can be collected through two methods- either quantitative or qualitative data. Saunders described quantitative data as any data collection techniques that generate numerical data e.g., surveys and questionnaires (Saunders, 2009). While qualitative is described as a data collection technique that generates non numerical data, e.g., interviews and forums (Saunders, 2009).

In order to ensure accuracy of data, the researcher engaged a quantitative approach and issued surveys to primary sources only. Secondary sources were also adopted through literature review and previous research results. The use secondary data has proved useful due to the being time effective as research has already been carried out.

The primary source was through a survey, used to collect information from the participants of the research. The survey applied was created for the targeted audience to ensure that it delivered the correct questions in order to gather the most relevant responses, which the researcher would rely on, to reach a conclusion.

In order to ensure the survey reached the widest possible audience, an online survey was the most effective data collection method. A link was sent to past employees of private homecare providers in Ireland.

The benefits of using surveys to collect information is that the researcher gets feedback on the exact questions that was set in the survey. The feedback is relevant and accurate, ensuring both accuracy and efficiency in the research process.

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5.3.1 Survey Design

A survey of analytical and relevant questions, with multiple choices, given to participants of a study or survey, to gather their feedback on the topic (Brace, 2008). The researcher notes that there are several pro's and cons of using a survey to gather data.

Advantages of an Online Survey

Using an online survey has many advantages, it is the most cost effective of gathering large amount of data from a large geographically spread sample size in a short space of time.

A survey will also have little effect on the validity and reliability of the research as the participants select their choices from a given set.

Brace advised that he believes surveys are the preferred data collection methods when testing or creating new theories (Brace, 2008).

Disadvantages

Surveys rely heavily on the participant providing truthful feedback and as is the case in anonymous surveys, there is no way to determine whether the answers provided by the participants are true or false.

Samuel believes that generally, surveys are not taken seriously by participants due to their increased use in research projects (Samuel, 2009).

5.3.2 Survey Administration

The surveys used were completed by research participants online.

The researcher contacted Home and Community Care Ireland, and other private providers operating in the private homecare industry in Ireland and asked if they would share the link to the survey with their past colleagues as part of their exit survey process. This method was adopted based on the need for feedback from a highly targeted group of individuals who have recently left the role of healthcare assistant for a private provider in the homecare industry in order to gain the most relevant and accurate data relating to the high employee turnover rates in the homecare industry in Ireland.

5.3.3 Validity & Reliability

In order for the data analysis to carry any relevancy, validity and reliability must be evident. Saunders defines reliability as the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings (Saunders, 2009) and validity as being concerned with whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about (Saunders, 2009).

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Golafshani also defined reliability as a process where the results can be easily duplicated in the future if the same study is conducted under the prevailing conditions and parameters (Golafshani, 2003).

The data collected during this research project from past employees of organisations within the homecare industry in Ireland may be used by other students and industry stakeholders in the future to assist in the development of employee retention strategies.

Stakeholders operating in the homecare industry in Ireland may also use this data to make informed business decisions. Golafshani advised that the use of the findings in further study and in industry applications demonstrate the need for validity and reliability in the research project (Golafshani, 2003).

Das advised that the researcher must be ethical and display high moral standards, and that the survey used in a research project was derived from formally tested questionnaires used by (Das, 2013)

Conclusions reached in this document were arrived at based on the factual data derived from the data collected through the methods described (Hom, 2012).

5.3.4 Population of Study

Preston defined population as the total number of a specific group of species or organisms which inhabit a specific geographic location (Preston, 2000).

The population identified to participate in this research were ex-employees of private operators in the homecare industry in Ireland that were willing to participate.

The reasoning behind this decision was simple, we are examining the reasons why employees employed as healthcare assistants made decisions to leave their employer in order to develop an understanding and develop a retention strategy that addresses these reasons. This was the best approach given the fact that truthfulness and honesty will provide accurate results that relate to the Irish homecare industry.

All participants were requested to answer survey questions relating to their decision to leave their previous employer, providing vital data related to this research project. The online survey excelled, with over 100 responses in the short timeframe.

5.3.4.1 Sample

Kortlik defined a sample as a pre-determined portion of the population used by researchers to provide vital data in a research (Kortlik, 2001) to create a statistical population consisting of research respondents and participants.

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As discussed, the sample for this research project was ex-employees of private operators in the homecare industry in Ireland.

5.3.4.2 Sample Size

Invites for participation were sent to ex-employees of private operators in the homecare industry in Ireland who were requested to participate in order to gather useful information both to provide insight into the reasons why they decided to leave their organisation, and to help operators in the homecare industry in Ireland to develop retention strategies that will see working conditions in the industry improve.

113 participants responded which provided this researcher with enough relevant data to deduce conclusive results on employee retention rates in the homecare industry in Ireland.

5.3.4.3 Sample Technique

The sampling technique employed for this research project is non-probabilistic. Saunders described non-probability sampling as a range of alternative techniques to select samples based on subjective judgement (Saunders, 2009). As the participation in this research was voluntary, the probability of attaining the sample used in this research was zero.

Several sampling techniques were employed to reach a sample, including convenience, self-selection, purposive and snowball sampling (Saunders, 2009).

Saunders described self-selection sampling as a process that allows individual to take part in the research voluntarily (Saunders, 2009) . All participants were given the opportunity to participate voluntarily in the research. No coercion was used to compel or motivate participants to participate. It was made clear that honesty was the most important element needed when filling out the survey.

As a result of time constraints, convenience sampling was adopted. Saunders defined convenience sampling as selecting those that are easiest to obtain for your sample (Saunders, 2009). Bryman also concluded that validity and reliability of results would also be given more credibility through this method of sampling (Bryman, 2011).

5.4 Ethics

Measures were in place to promote ethical behaviour throughout research project.

We sought a non-biased approach and asked all participants to respond based on their own circumstance, as a result, participation was honest and results were unpredictable and reliable.

All participants completed the survey anonymously, their privacy was key throughout the entire process. Participants of the survey were not required to disclose any identifiable information. All

responses were only accessible to the researcher and will only be stored for the duration of the research and destroyed after.

Surveys were anonymous, the results of the research and feedback was only used for the fulfilment of my master's in business administration.

As per Gregory, these measures were taken to ensure that all ethical issues were considered (Gregory, 2003).

5.5 Bias

In order to produce the most accurate research, it is important to ensure that no elements of bias are introduced into the research. This research project was carried out with an open mind and although some of the responses in the data collected may be considered bias, all efforts were made to eliminate bias throughout all stages of the research.

As per Sica, anonymity was upheld at all times and no identifiable information was requested as part of the survey (Sica, 2006).

5.6 Limitations

There are some limitations in this research.

The survey only requested feedback from ex-employee of the homecare industry in Ireland which limits the application of the results, as it does not take into consideration the potential responses from current employees considering leaving their employment, or current employees who are enthusiastic stayers (Hom, 2012) who could provide vital information as to what makes them stay so enthusiastically.

The sample size of 113, represents less than 1% of the number of healthcare assistants in Ireland in 2021 (HCCI, 2019) A higher response rate from ex-employees may have provided greater insight for the research, and potentially more data could have been collected. although, as per Reiter, a small sample size will still produce results that are accurate and reflect the situation as it is in the industry (Reiter, 2010).

6.0 Findings

6.1 Employment Information

6.1.1 Question 2

For what duration were you employed as Healthcare Assistant?

Answered: 106 Skipped: 7

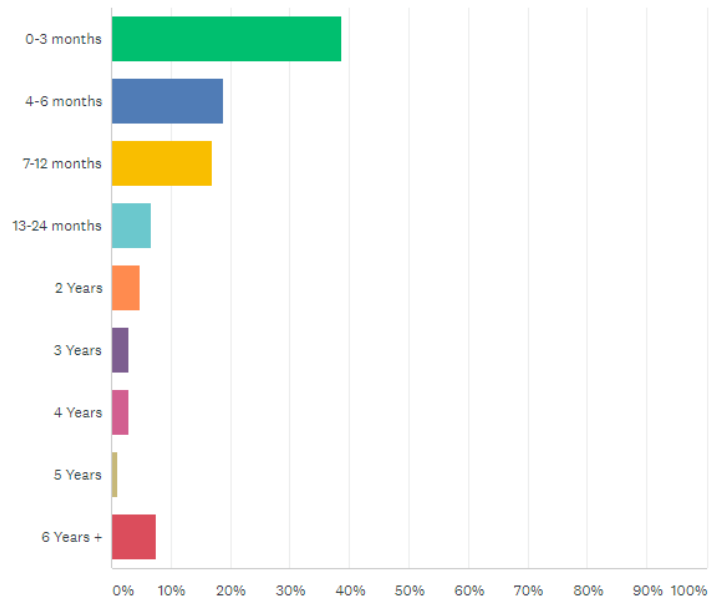


Fig 6.1.1.1- For what duration were you employed as Healthcare Assistant?

6.1.3 Question 3

Geographically, where was your work based?

Answered: 110 Skipped: 3

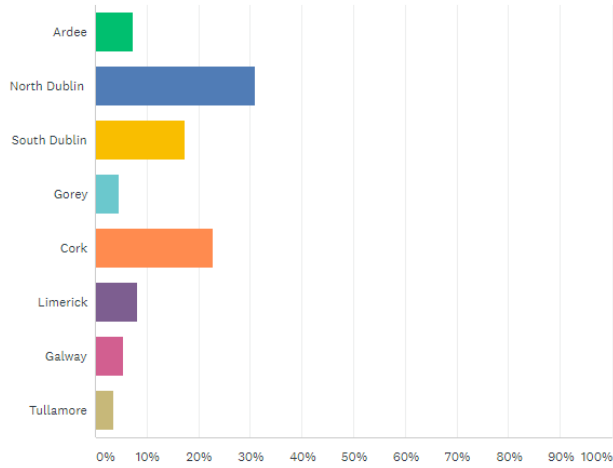


Fig 6.1.3.1- Where was your work based?

6.1.4 Question 4

Were you aware of your company values when you started your position?

Answered: 53 Skipped: 60

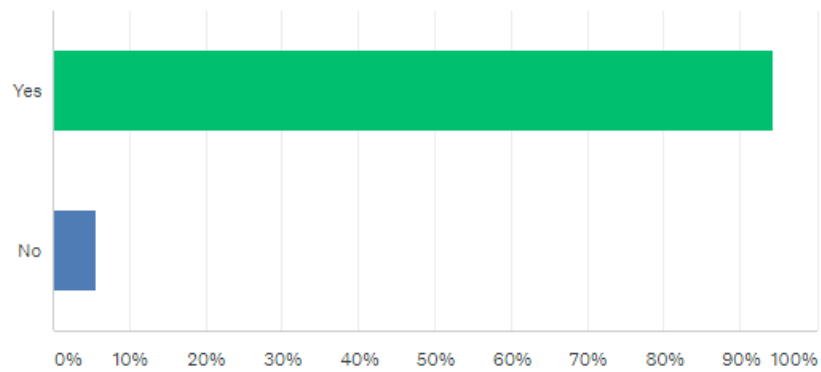


Fig 6.1.4.1- Were you aware of your company values when you started your position?

6.1.5 Question 5

How satisfied were you in your role?

Answered: 96 Skipped: 17

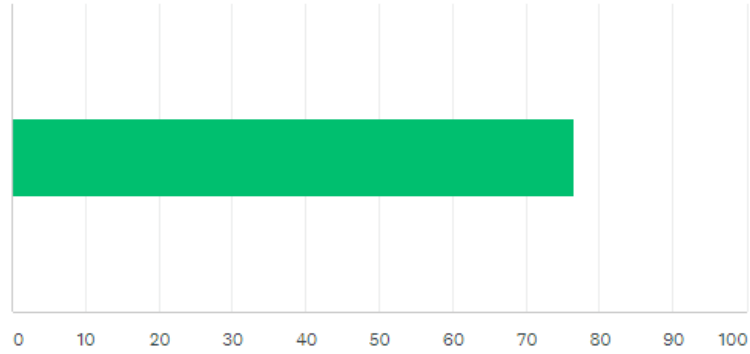


Fig 6.1.5.1- How satisfied were you in your role?

6.2 Recruitment Process

6.2.1 Question 6

What attracted you to your role as a Healthcare Assistant?

company time looking family Love working elderly people
 wanted field work work elderly help people Carer
 people Care help others hours

Fig 6.2.1.1- What attracted you to your role as a Healthcare Assistant?

6.2.2 Question 7

How did you apply for this role?

How did you apply for this role?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 71

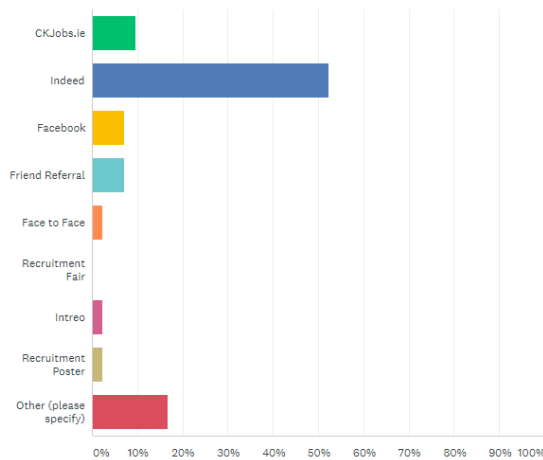


Fig 6.2.2.1- How did you apply for this role?

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X18131778

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6.2.3 Question 8

Please rate your experience of the recruitment process you went through before becoming a Healthcare Assistant.

Answered: 41 Skipped: 72

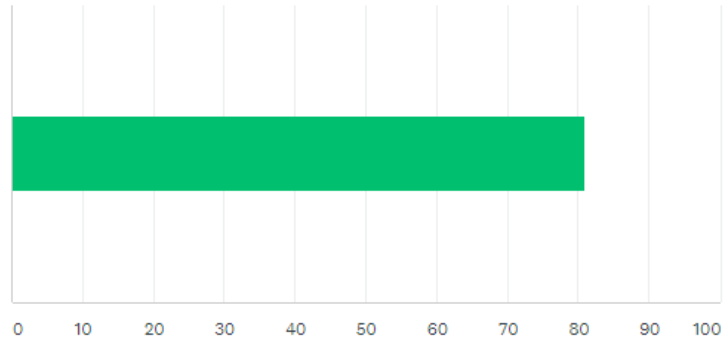


Fig 6.2.3.1- Please rate your experience of the recruitment process you went through before becoming a Healthcare Assistant.

6.2.4 Question 9

Were the role, responsibilities and duties made clear to you during the recruitment process?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 72

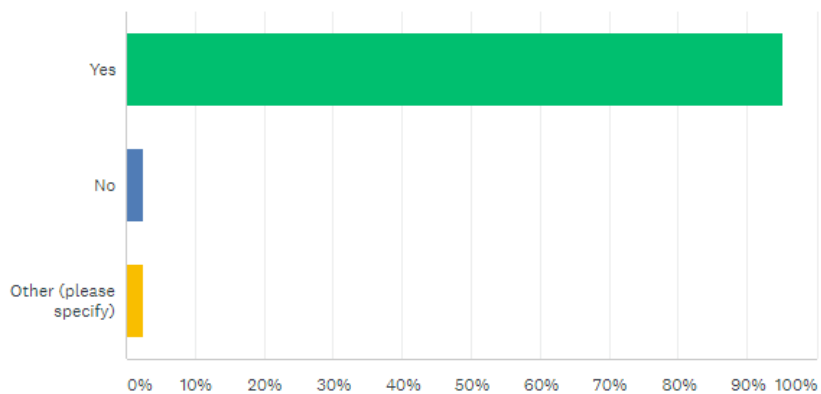


Fig 6.2.4.1- Were the role, responsibilities and duties made clear to you during the recruitment process?

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6.2.5 Question 10

Did your job duties turn out to be as expected?

Answered: 75 Skipped: 38

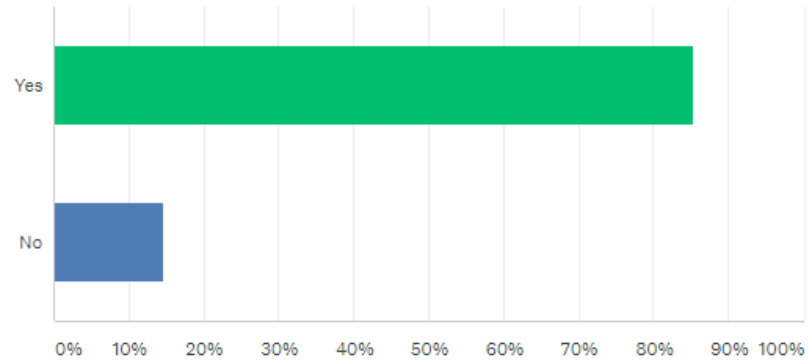


Fig 6.2.5.1- Did your job duties turn out to be as expected?

6.2.6 Question 11

Were pay compensation and benefits, including hourly rates of pay, incentives and other benefits made clear during the recruitment process?

Answered: 43 Skipped: 70

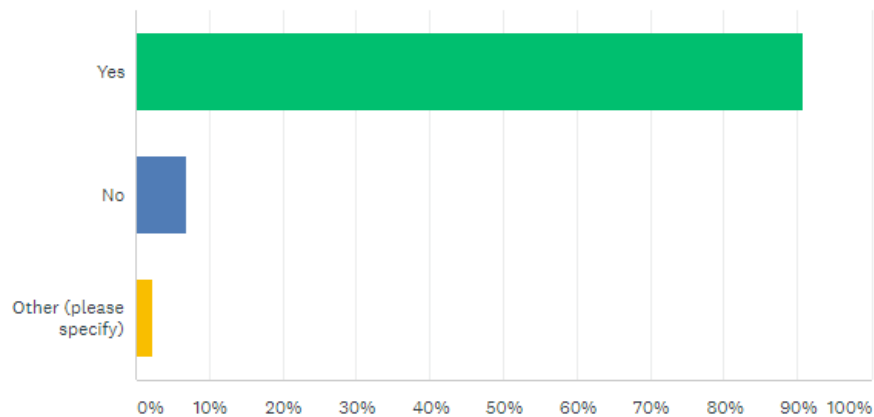


Fig 6.2.6.1- Were pay compensation and benefits, including hourly rates of pay, incentives and other benefits made clear during the recruitment process?

6.3 Management & Supervision

6.3.1 Question 12

Please rate the quality of the support that you received from your office team.

Answered: 90 Skipped: 23

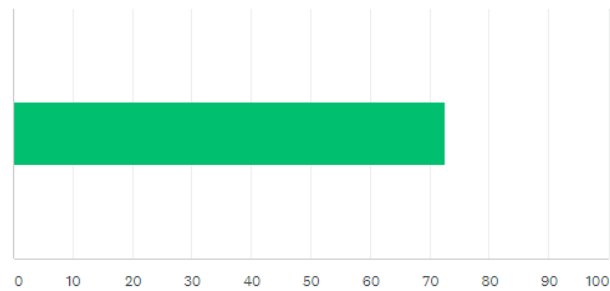


Fig 6.3.1.1- Please rate the quality of the support that you received from your office team.

6.3.2 Question 13

How would you rate the overall environment and atmosphere? (1 - extremely negative and unpleasant, and 10 - extremely positive and pleasant)

Answered: 48 Skipped: 65

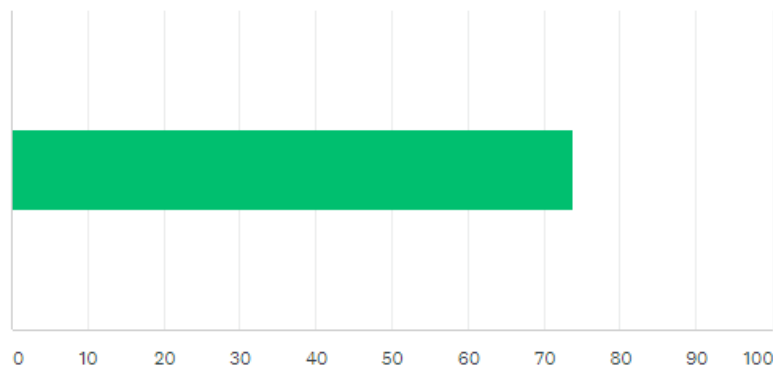


Fig 6.3.2.1- How would you rate the overall environment and atmosphere? (1 - extremely negative and unpleasant, and 10 - extremely positive and pleasant)

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6.3.3 Question 14

Is there anything your line manager could have done differently do improve his or her management style?

staff better communication office

Fig 6.3.3.1- Is there anything your line manager could have done differently do improve his or her management style?

6.3.4 Question 15

Did you receive sufficient and regular feedback about your performance?

Answered: 43 Skipped: 70

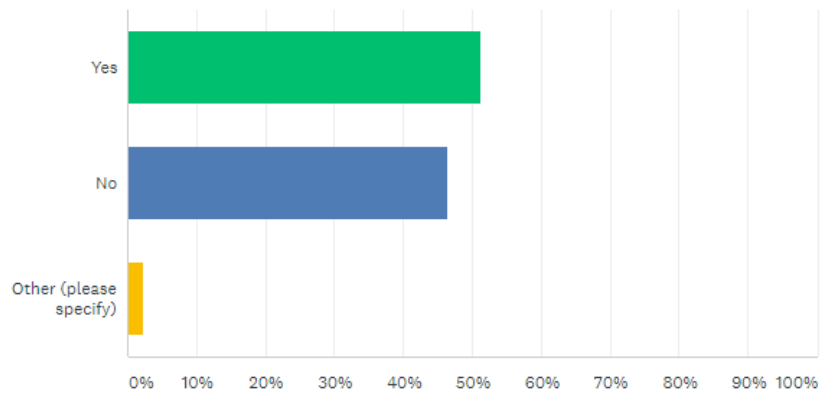


Fig 6.3.4.1- Did you receive sufficient and regular feedback about your performance?

6.3.5 Question 16

How would you rate your relationship with your immediate manager?

Answered: 91 Skipped: 22

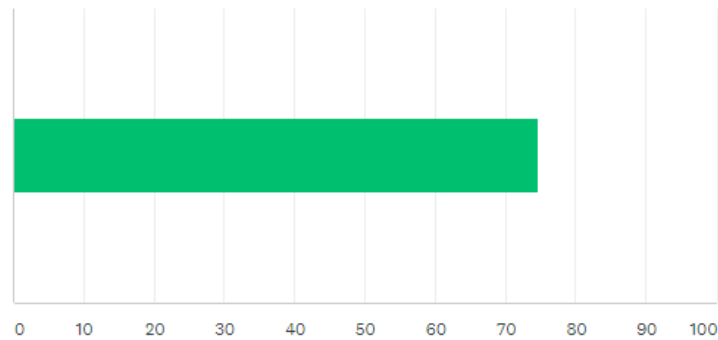


Fig 6.3.5.1- How would you rate your relationship with your immediate manager?

6.3.6 Question 17

Did this relationship impact your decision to leave your role as a Healthcare Assistant?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 62

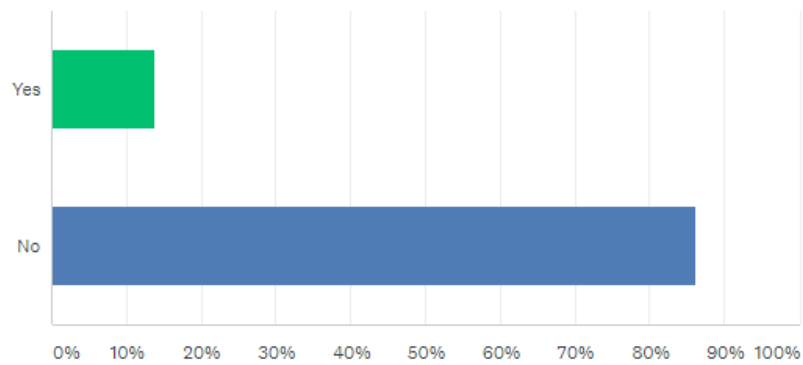


Fig 6.3.6.1 Did this relationship impact your decision to leave your role as a Healthcare Assistant.

6.4 Work-Life Balance

6.4.1 Question 18

How many hours per week where you rostered to work?

Answered: 99 Skipped: 14

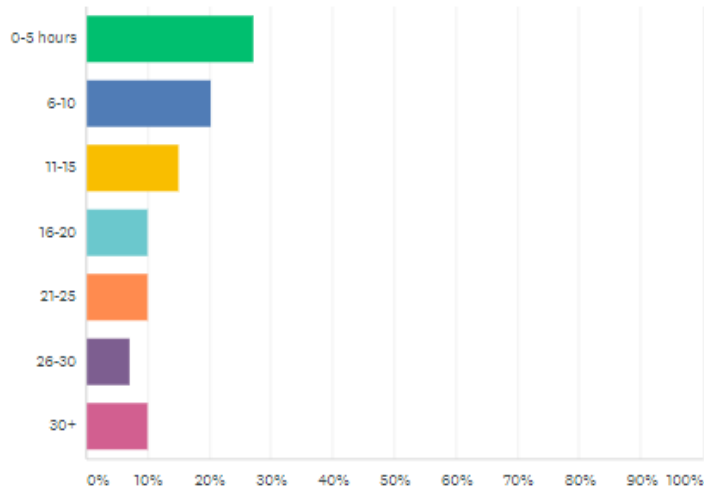


Fig 6.4.1.1- How many hours per week where you rostered to work?

6.4.2 Question 19

How many hours per week would you like to have been rostered to work?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 63

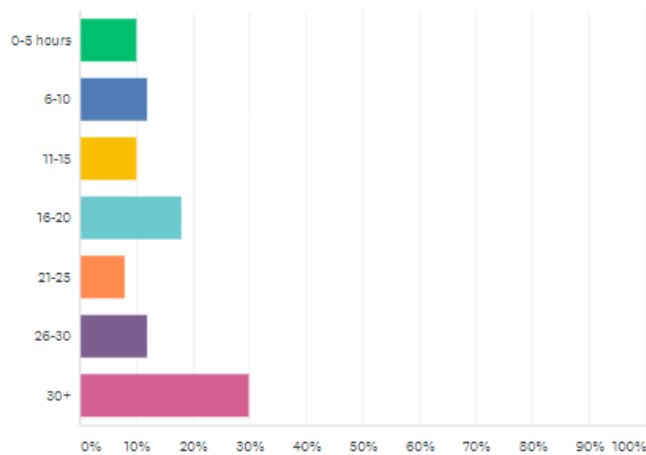


Fig 6.4.2.1- How many hours per week would you like to have been rostered to work?

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6.4.3 Question 20

If you worked less hours than what you would have preferred, did anyone from your organisation contact you to discuss your lack of hours?

office lack hours contacted head office **Yes** head office lack
Happy hours carer lack hours daily

Fig 6.4.3.1- If you worked less hours than what you would have preferred, did anyone from your organisation contact you to discuss your lack of hours?

6.4.4 Question 21

Were you aware of the advertised contracted guaranteed minimum hours Healthcare Assistant roles some companies are advertising?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 72

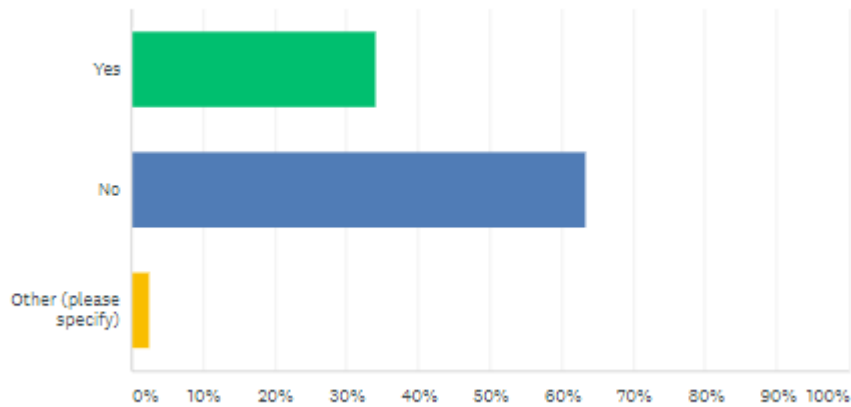


Fig 6.4.4.1- Were you aware of the advertised contracted guaranteed minimum hours Healthcare Assistant roles some companies are advertising?

6.4.5 Question 22

Did you work less hours than what your contract stated?

Answered: 66 Skipped: 47

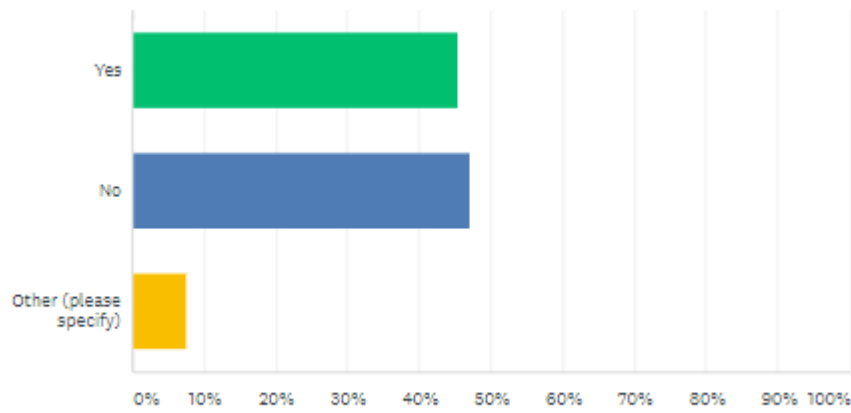


Fig 6.4.5.1- Did you work less hours than what your contract stated?

6.5 Learning and Development

6.5.1 Question 23

Do you think the training and support received upon beginning your role as a healthcare assistant prepared you to do your job effectively?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 64

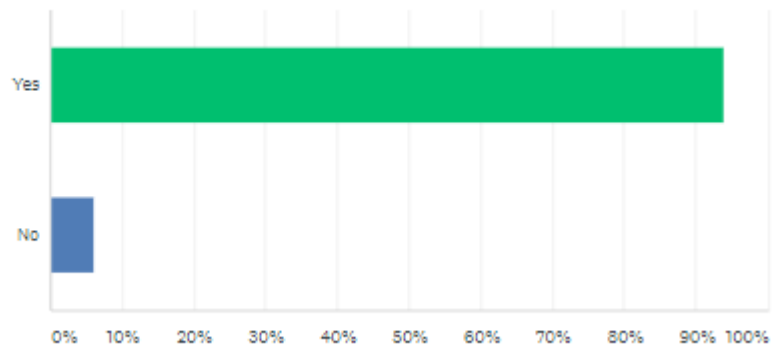


Fig 6.5.1.1- Do you think the training and support received upon beginning your role as a healthcare assistant prepared you to do your job effectively?

6.5.2 Question 24

How satisfied were you with the quality of the training that you received upon beginning your role as a healthcare assistant?

Answered: 91 Skipped: 22

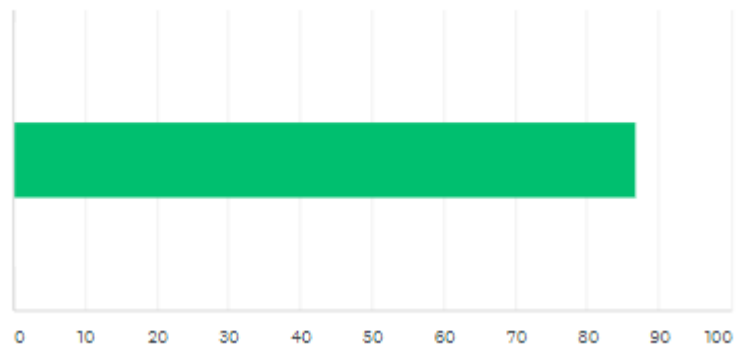


Fig 6.5.2.1 How satisfied were you with the quality of the training that you received upon beginning your role as a healthcare assistant?

6.6 Human Resources

6.6.1 Question 25

Did your position as a Healthcare Assistant provide a good work-life balance?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 61

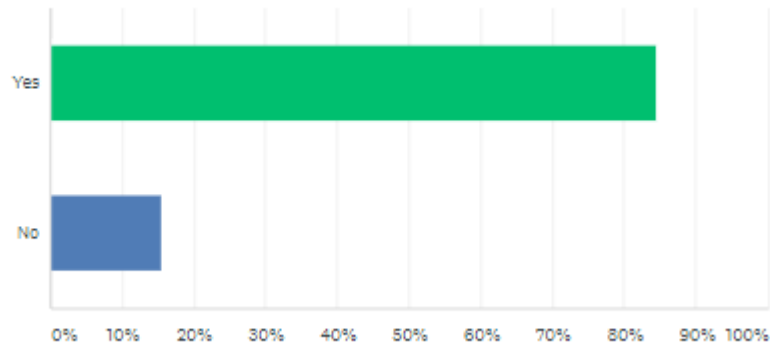


Fig 6.6.1.1- Did your position as a Healthcare Assistant provide a good work-life balance?

6.6.2 Question 26

Would you recommend the role of Healthcare Assistant to your family and friends?

Answered: 63 Skipped: 50

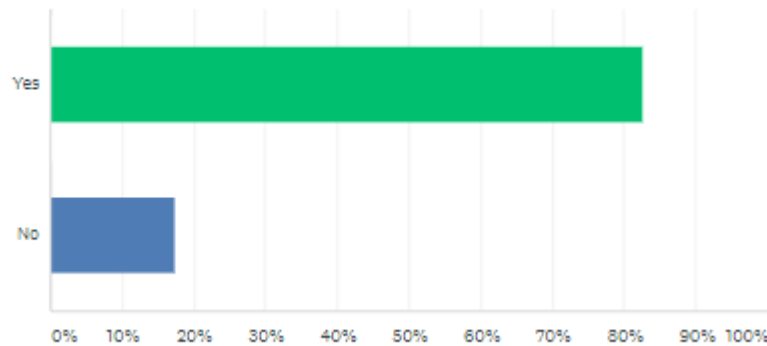


Fig 6.6.2.1- Would you recommend the role of Healthcare Assistant to your family and friends?

6.6.3 Question 27

Did your company assist you in fulfilling your career goals?

Answered: 47 Skipped: 66

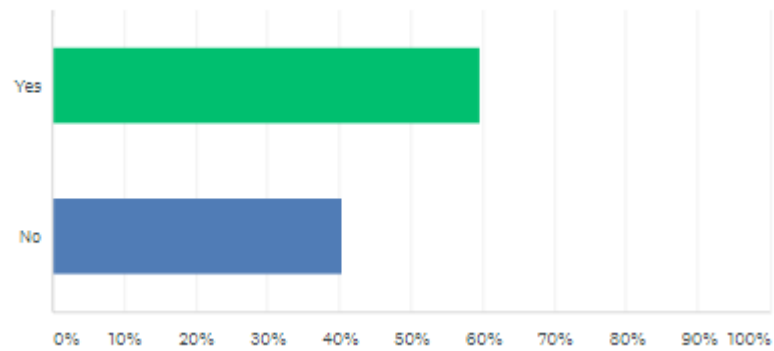


Fig 6.6.3.1- Did your company assist you in fulfilling your career goals?

6.6.4 Question 28

Did your organisation have an Employee Assistance Programme in place?

Answered: 39 Skipped: 74

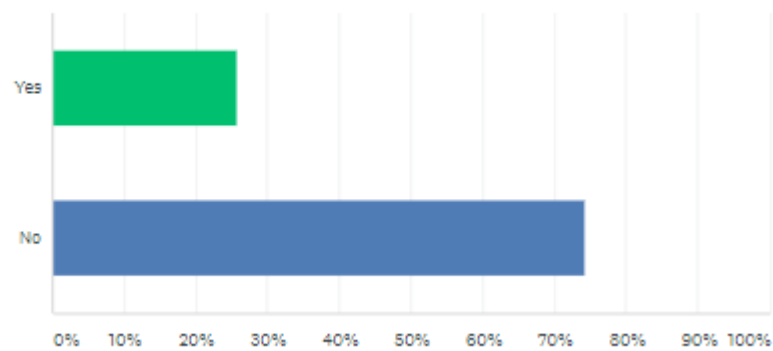


Fig 6.6.4.1- Did your organisation have an Employee Assistance Programme in place?

6.6.5 Question 29

Have you been in touch with anyone from your HR Department?

Answered: 41 Skipped: 72

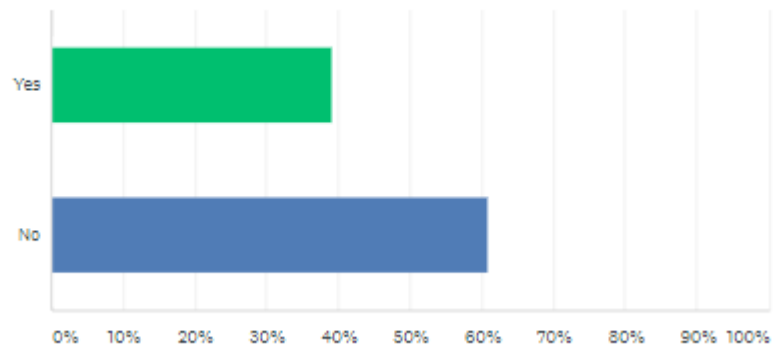


Fig 6.6.5.1- Have you been in touch with anyone from your HR Department?

6.6.6 Question 30

Was the interaction with the HR Department useful?

Answered: 42 Skipped: 71

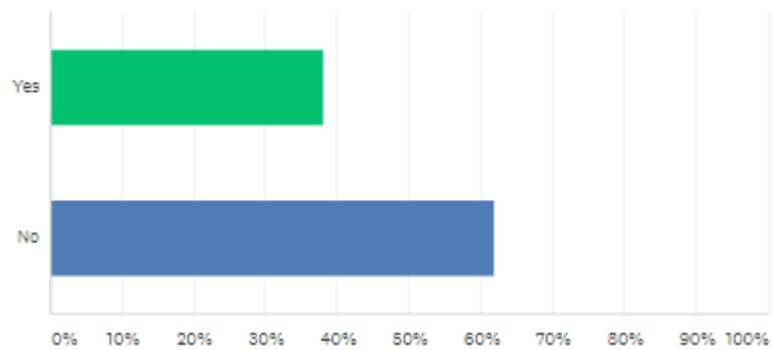


Fig 6.6.6.1 Was the interaction with the HR Department useful?

6.7 Leaving your role as a Healthcare Assistant

6.7.1 Question 31

What best describes your primary reason for leaving?

Answered: 103 Skipped: 10

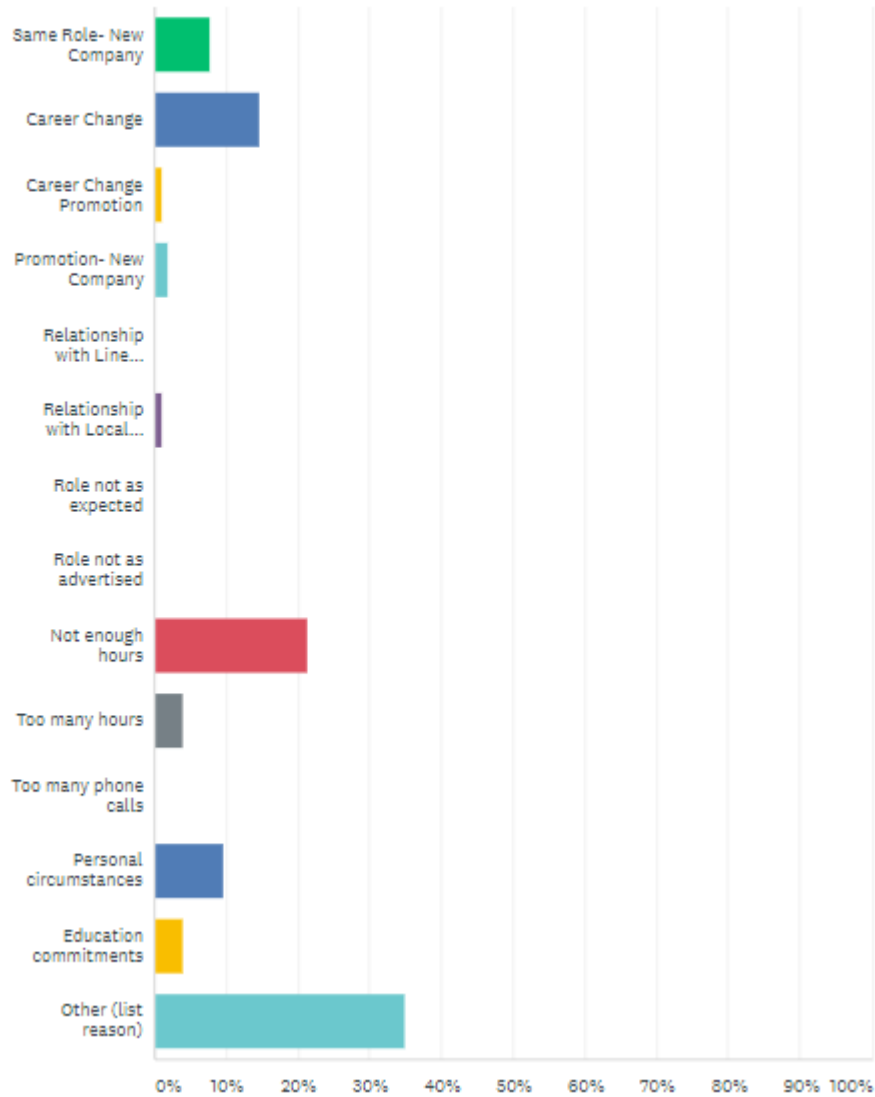


Fig 6.7.1.1- What best describes your primary reason for leaving?

Derek Conway

X18131778

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6.7.2 Question 32

Is there anything that you can think of, that your organisation could have done differently, that would have impacted your decision to leave?

clients employee time needed told change Better one call
gave hours day pay Listen work schedule travel coming
office Wanted

Fig 6.7.2.1- Is there anything that you can think of, that your organisation could have done differently, that would have impacted your decision to leave?

6.7.4 Question 33

What did you like most about working as a Healthcare Assistant?

relationships Management carers helping good loved work
hours clients time staff Support people friendly office
great

Fig 6.7.4.1- What did you like most about working as a Healthcare Assistant?

6.7.5 Question 34

If your employment as a Healthcare Assistant lasted 3 months or less, can you please give provide more detail on your decision to leave the role?

going job hours traveling N

Fig 6.7.5.1- If your employment as a Healthcare Assistant lasted 3 months or less, can you please give provide more detail on your decision to leave the role?

6.8 Client Relations

6.8.1 Question 35

Did you consider your organisation to be a caring company?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 56

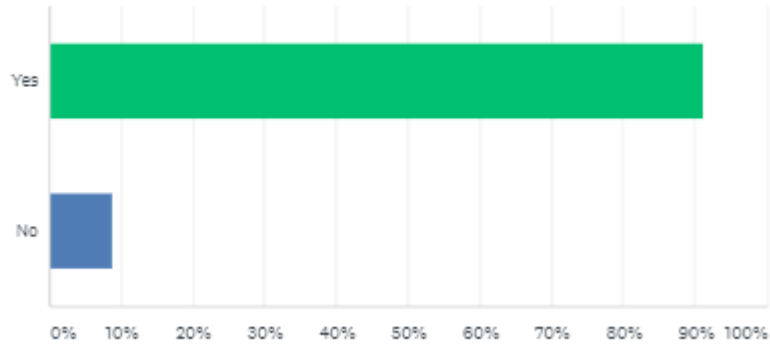


Fig 6.8.1.1- Did you consider your organisation to be a caring company?

6.8.2 Question 36

Would you recommend your organisation as a provider of care to your friends and family?

Answered: 63 Skipped: 50

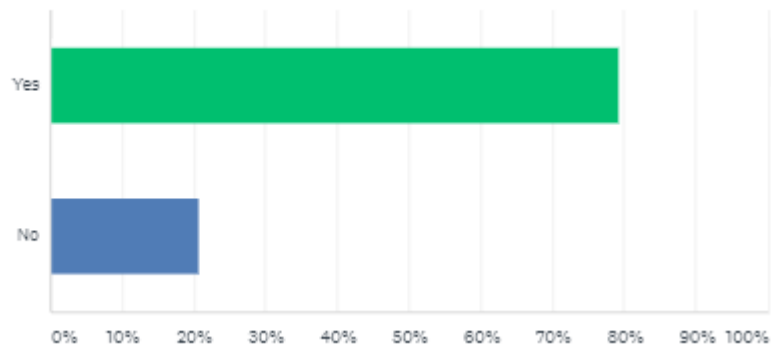


Fig 6.8.2.1- Would you recommend your organisation as a provider of care to your friends and family?

6.8.3 Question 37

How would you rate the relationships with your clients?

Answered: 91 Skipped: 22

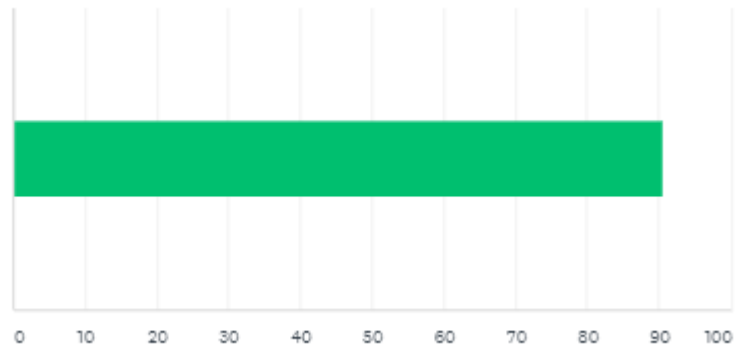


Fig 6.8.3.1- How would you rate the relationships with your clients?

6.8.4 Question 38

Did these relationships impact your decision to leave?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 57

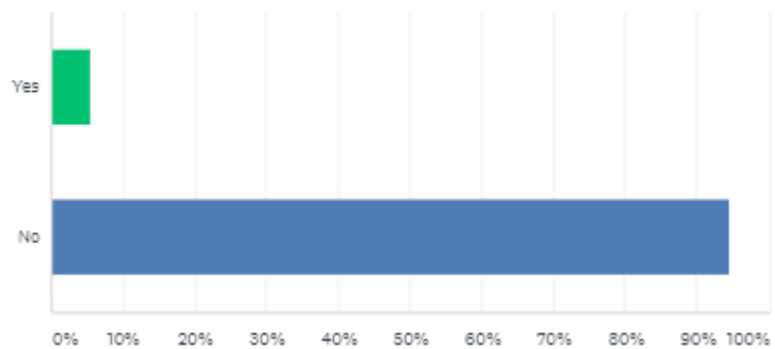


Fig 6.8.4.1- Did these relationships impact your decision to leave?

6.9 Any Other Feedback

6.9.1 Question 39

Thank you for taking the time today. Is there anything else you would like to add that we should consider?

job scheduling company call client issue work felt
hours asked people go office communication staff back
carers

Fig 6.9.1.1 Is there anything else you would like to add that we should consider?

7.0 Results and Discussion

7.1 Introduction

Survey Monkey was used to design the survey, which included 39 questions based on eight different themes highlighted during the literature review for this research project. The themes are- General Employment Feedback, Attraction and Recruitment, Management and Supervision, Work-Life Balance, Learning and Development, Human Resources, Decision to Leave and Client Relations. These themes, along with the 38 questions helped gather great insight into the research question.

The first four questions, and the final question related to the general employment information relating to the participant. This theme of the research highlighted results relating to length of service, the area in the country they worked, and their general satisfaction with the role. This allowed the researcher to deduce the average length of service within the homecare industry and how satisfied they were with their role.

The following six questions related to the participants attraction to the role, how they heard about, what attracted them to the role, and if the recruitment process they went through gave enough information on the role, as well as the breakdown of compensation and benefits. Participant were required to respond to some questions using ten-point Likert scale relating to satisfaction with the recruitment process. In this theme, the researcher also questioned the participants satisfaction with their compensation and benefits packages offered by their organisation. T

The next theme of Management and Supervision included six questions, once again using a Likert scale point seeking information about the participant's supervisor and line manager.

Five of the following questions related to the theme Work-Life Balance, which made use of scales as well as open ended questions. The participants were asked questions relating to their own personal experience regarding work-life balance, how satisfied they were with their rosters or amount of work they were provided with.

Learning and Development was the next theme, which accounted for only two questions- did the induction training prepare you for the role you undertook, and how satisfied were the participants with the quality of the training delivered.

There were six questions relating to the role of Human Resources in their organisation. These questions focused on wellbeing initiatives, career development and if they found interactions with their HR department useful.

The next theme was around client relations. It is understood that healthcare assistants who care for individuals create bonds with the clients they care for. This theme explores this aspect of the role, and if it had any impact on the participants decision to leave their employment.

The final theme of the survey relates to the participants decision to leave employment, here we looked at future plans (Bergman, 2012) and what made them reach their final decision to resign, and categorise them in line with Homs categorisation of leavers (Hom, 2012).

Derek Conway

X18131778

MBA2

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The survey can be found in the Appendix, and the graphs relating to responses can be found in section 6 of this report- Findings.

7.2 Work Life Balance

An unfavourable balance between work commitments and life has the potential to cause conflict which can attribute directly with the high employee turnover. Qu reported that a lack of work-life balance can contribute heavily towards creating a dissatisfied workforce, which may, if left without resolution can lead to increased employee turnover (Qu, 2012).

As discussed previously, it can be very difficult for homecare to provide a degree of flexibility, as the rosters and care visits for clients are scheduled based on a clinically assessed and carefully created care plan which dictates when and how the service should be delivered- i.e., assisting clients in and out of bed, preparing meals and prompting medication.

As per Fig 6.4.1.1- How many hours per week were you rostered to work?

Out of 99 respondents, 27% answered between 0-5 hours, which accounted for the majority of the feedback, with the rest spread across 5 other options. This being the lowest option available. When compared with the response rate in Fig 6.4.2.1- How many hours per week would you like to have been rostered to work? Out of 50 respondents, 30% said they would have liked to work 30+ hours a week. Whereas only 10% said that they would like to work between 0-5 hours.

This displays a huge gap both in expectations and the reality of the work available.

Whilst this shows that out the leavers that responded, a significant amount wasn't working the hours they desired, which can cause a lot of issues in other areas of their life, particularly financially.

Home and Community Care reported in 2018 that based on how homecare work is commissioned by the Health Service Executive creates a volatility for private providers (HCCI, 2019). Homecare sanctioned by the Health Service Executive is usually transactional and payment is based on hourly or half-hourly care visits per client with an agreed tender rate for the timed care provided.

If a private provider has a client whose care is paid for by the Health Service Executive no longer requires care, for any reason, including family intervention, hospitalisation or death, the contract that the HSE have for this client ceases, and there is no overlap of payment.

These challenges can be very difficult to manage from a provider perspective, and usually the brunt of the issue will be shouldered by the Healthcare Assistant who previously delivered care.

While there is an appetite to work more hours amongst leavers, the majority of care needs are generally delivered between core times based on the client's needs, these are usually unsocial hours as the greatest needs of these clients is assistance with personal care, both in the morning assisting out of bed, and in the evening, assisting clients back into bed.

Due to restrictions placed on care delivery by the Organisation of Working Time Act (Oireachtas.ie, 2019), it can be difficult to roster care delivery hours with the same client in the morning and again

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in the same evening, or the following morning. This can also create real challenge for finding the balance between work/life.

In Fig 6.4.4.1- Were you aware of the advertised contracted guaranteed minimum hours Healthcare Assistant roles some companies are advertising? 62% of respondents said they weren't aware that private operators were offering a minimum hour contract to healthcare assistants. Initiatives like this are needed to ensure that the service can be delivered consistently, and if communicated effectively, could have impacted on the numbers deciding to depart the organisation.

In implementing a scheme like this, the organisation must ensure that any down time because of a client ending their service is minimal and that replacement clients are made a priority for employees who opt-in to these terms.

Working as a healthcare assistant in Homecare can also generate a lot of stress due to the nature of the work. This can impact heavily on a decision of a healthcare assistant on whether they want to remain in this line of work or find a role that can offer a greater degree of flexibility, a higher salary or a more consistent work pattern.

There are many wellbeing initiatives that exist to help combat and reduce work-related stress. This research discovered that the vast majority of private providers do not offer an Employee Assistance Programme which could provide free, for the end user, counselling services, financial advice and other family led services. In, Fig 6.6.4.1 Does your organisation have an Employee Assistance Programme? 75% of respondents indicated that their organisation did not have an Employee Assistance Programme. As Uchida discovered in 2007, 86% of individuals within their study saw significant drops in stress levels following engaging with an Employee Assistance Programme by the end of the study (Uchida, 2007).

This research indicates that past employees were not satisfied with the work-life conflict caused by their roles as healthcare assistants and organisations need to adopt a new approach to the commissioning and rostering of their employees' rosters as this appears to be a key factor in reaching the decision to leave an employer within the healthcare industry for the majority of participants.

7.3 Compensation and Benefits

Home and Community Care Ireland advised that as the majority of the work private homecare providers deliver is commissioned by the Health Service Executive, and is usually transactional and based on hourly or hourly care visits with an agreed tender rate for care provided (HCCI, 2019).

This payment scheme forces private operators to structure their Compensation and Benefits package in a similar fashion, as the nature of the work is so volatile, it can be difficult to guarantee an income to Healthcare Assistants

91% of respondents, as displayed in Fig 6.2.6.1- Were pay compensation and benefits, including hourly rates of pay, incentives and other benefits made clear during the recruitment process?

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understood the payment structure, and that this was explained to them well during their recruitment and onboarding process.

However, what may not have been explained to the candidate was the vulnerability of pay in the homecare industry. Employees in other industries could reasonably expect that they will work all of the hours they are rostered for at the start of the week, whereas a healthcare assistant may be rostered to work twelve hours of care at the start of the week, the way work is commissioned by the Health Service Executive (HSE, 2015), including cancellation periods, a private provider has no way to guarantee consistency within that rostered week due to hospitalisations, or even from week to week as client turnover in this industry is also extremely high, through hospital admissions, decisions to move to nursing homes and death can disrupt healthcare assistants' weekly earnings considerably (HCCI, 2019).

Of those surveyed, 45% answered yes, that they were not rostered for the minimum number of hours contracted. The graph in Fig 6.4.5.1- Did you work less hours than what your contract stated? This note is strengthened in Fig 6.7.1.1- What best describes your primary reason for leaving? In which 12% of participants indicated their reason for leaving as being not being rostered for enough hours.

This research indicates that participants in this survey were not happy with how their work is commissioned, how they are paid nor are they satisfied with the vulnerability of their work, and the potential for wild variances in pay from week to week and compensation and benefits is a key factor in reaching the decision to leave an employer within the healthcare industry for the majority of participants.

7.4 Work Environment

73% of participants indicated they were satisfied with the quality of the support that you received from their office support team. In Fig 6.3.1.1, it also indicates that 27% of the participants were not satisfied with the quality of the support they received from their office support team.

The results found in Fig 6.3.4.1- Did you receive sufficient and regular feedback about your performance? Also supports the case that an issue exists as 47% of participants advised that they felt they did not receive sufficient or regular feedback about their performance.

Fig 6.3.3.1- Is there anything your line manager could have done differently do improve his or her management style? Indicates that they would have liked to have seen better communication from their line manager, as this was mentioned in 36% percent of responses.

However, participants indicated in Fig 6.3.5.1- How would you rate your relationship with your immediate manager? That they were 75% satisfied with the relationship between them and their line manager, and 86% advised that this relationship had no impact on their decision to leave their role as a healthcare assistant, as expressed in Fig 6.3.6.1.

The results of this research indicate that employees are satisfied with their role, the support they receive from their local office support team, and their direct line manager, therefore, this element does not appear to be a key factor in reaching the decision to leave an employer within the healthcare industry for the majority of participants.

7.5 Learning and Development

Participants strongly indicated the training they completed for their role prepared them and provided them with the appropriate skills to carry out their roles safely. As per Fig 6.5.1.1- Do you think the training and support received upon beginning your role as a healthcare assistant prepared you to do your job effectively? 93% of respondents felt their organisation had prepared them for their role.

As per Fig 6.5.2.1 How satisfied were you with the quality of the training that you received upon beginning your role as a healthcare assistant? Participants provided a satisfaction score of 83% for the quality of the training received.

This research indicates that employees are satisfied with the content and quality of training delivered to prepare them for their roles as healthcare assistants and the learning and development function does not appear to be a key factor in reaching the decision to leave an employer within the healthcare industry for the majority of participants.

7.6 Human Resources

The possibility of career progression is a key component in the attraction of a lot of low paid entry level roles (McGinley, 2014), however, as previously discussed, career progression may not always be the motivating factor for whether an employee remains with an organisation or leaves, particularly in the homecare industry, As per Fig 6.6.3.1- Did your company assist you in fulfilling your career goals? Out of 47 responses, 60% of participants felt their organisations assisted them in fulfilling their career goals.

This is despite there being only a relatively small scope for progression within the industry, which would also mean in most cases the candidate would have to move into non-client facing roles, which to many in the role of healthcare assistant would seem counter-intuitive, as per both as per Fig 6.8.3.1- How would you rate the relationships with your clients? And Fig 6.8.4.1- Did these relationships impact your decision to leave? 94% of respondents advised the relationship with clients had no bearings on their decision to leave their employer, while they provided a satisfaction rating of 90% based on the relationship they have with their clients, and in Fig 6.7.4.1- What did you like most about working as a Healthcare Assistant? The word client was the most mentioned with 70 mentions.

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As part of this research, either availability or lack of career progression does not appear to be a key factor in reaching the decision to leave an employer within the healthcare industry for the majority of participants.

This finding differs from McGinley's findings relating to roles with low barriers of entry whereby many employees enter an industry with the intention of remaining and building a career (McGinley, 2014).

Other respondents indicated that 61% of participants had been in contact with their Human Resource department, as per Fig 6.6.5.1- Have you been in touch with anyone from your HR Department? , but only 62% of these felt that the interaction was useful, As per Fig 6.6.6.1.

This statistic leads to the researcher to believe that there could potentially other underlying issues which will require further study. What were the issues they were in contact with their Human Resources Department for, and why were so few satisfied with the level of service received? Could this have impacted participants decisions to resign?

8.0 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

Organisations operating within the Irish Homecare Industry could create a multi-pronged retention strategy encompassing a number of different elements to help reduce employee turnover.

As a result of this research, a number of different approaches have been identified to tackle the issue. In order to implement an employee retention strategy effectively, organisations will need to start at the very beginning, by adopting a mission and set of values that their best healthcare assistants can believe and align with (Hom, 2012) and (Bergman, 2012) as well, as the mission and values, organisations must also develop policies and procedures that reflect a better working environment.

Recruitment and selection practices should be reviewed, audited and refreshed to ensure new entrants to an organisation fully understand the role they are taking on, the importance of their presence to their clients, along with an honest overview of compensation and benefits and the vulnerabilities within their rosters and potential earnings.

While it was reported that the majority of respondents felt that the induction and on the job training delivered the skills they needed to prepare them for their new role, it may not have prepared them for the work/life balance conflict, the potential stresses related to their role, and the supports the organisation provide to help deal with the potential work related stress.

Communication is key to building an engaged team, allowing healthcare assistants to be involved with the decisions related to their role will add value to their role, and indeed their organisation (Vargo, 2008). Developing a communication plan through a channel that reaches the intended employee and delivers a clear succinct message will assist in retaining employees, this should be key in the development of any Employee Retention Strategy.

8.1.2 Work Life Balance

A number of private operators in the homecare market offer a range of employment contracts to potential candidates which cater to those who need flexibility, This contract may suit candidates who require a high degree of flexibility in their work patterns, however, the non-committal nature of these employment contracts creates a disadvantage for candidates who opt for this approach meaning that as they have not committed fully to the employment, the employer has not fully committed to them, and offer terms that suit the nature of the industry, i.e. no fixed hours, no minimum payment amounts and very little security.

There are other options available for healthcare assistants. If flexibility is not as important to a candidate, there are organisations offering minimum of 20, 30 and full-time hour contracts with fixed salaries. However, while this can offer security and guaranteed work, it requires full dedication

to the role, as explained previously, care visits and times are set by the needs of the client, and for employees who opt for this option, it leaves no room for flexibility in terms of the care visits they are rostered to attend.

A balance could be found somewhere in between (Doherty, 2004). Guaranteed minimum hour contracts with set roster patterns, and other initiatives like job sharing and flexible working requests could assist in adding security for employees (Maslow, 1943) and allow employees to move to the next step in the theory of motivation.

Introducing more variations of employment contracts that suit employees needs and wants will help increase job satisfaction and commitment of the healthcare assistants (Gunnigle, 2017), as employees who are satisfied with their jobs will be more committed to the organisation (Muchinsky P., 1979).

8.1.3 Compensation and Benefits

Organisations operating within the homecare industry lose a significant number of their employees each year both to competitors in the same industry offering higher rates of pay and to other industries offering similar improvements in rates of pay, these can both be associated with Porters Forces (Porter, 1979). Threat of new entrants and substitute produces, coupled with a lack of supply of candidates, and increase in demand for services from the industry, has led to the need for organisations in the homecare industry to reflect on their current compensation and benefits strategy.

Fig 6.7.1.1- What best describes your primary reason for leaving? Indicates that a significant percentage of leavers made the decision to leave based on finances. While at first glance, this may seem like an easy issue to rectify, in reality, the margins are extremely thin, and increases in salaries could result in many organisations operating at a loss.

An increasing salary scale could be a solution (Dulebohn, 2009), linking points on a salary scale to key performance indicators, length of service and qualifications will help engage, reward and retain existing employees. The scale element will allow for organisations to budget for anticipated changes, and price appropriately when tendering for work from the Health Service Executive in future tender bids.

8.4 Learning and Development

Although Learning and development performed strongly and produced high satisfaction scores, an introduction of a salary scale will also create a new aspect for the learning and development departments of organisations, as healthcare assistants will see the financial benefits of gaining further qualifications and career progression, a new responsibility will be placed with learning and development teams to create and deliver the tools to deliver the most effective programmes and qualifications as part of the retention strategy.

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Formal training of healthcare assistants will need to be delivered to help develop the careers of healthcare assistant who want to take the next step in their careers, but also remain in client-facing roles.

All organisations in the homecare industry would benefit from the introduction of a mentoring programme to prepare healthcare assistants for their roles by giving new entrants a contact point that is not their direct line manager and speak to someone who has been through similar work cases, offer advice and help alleviate stress in the workplace, as well as providing an opportunity for development for existing long standing experienced healthcare assistants.

8.1.5 Human Resources

While career progression has been spoken about at great length in this research project, and participants of the survey indicated that their organisation have supported their career progression, it is important to note that organisations do advertises for vacancies internally and do promote internally. One organisation reported that of all office-based vacancies in 2020, 65% were filled via internal promotions (CK, 2020).

An internal communication strategy will help deliver this message to their people and help create a pathway for colleagues to know exactly what progression paths are available.

The homecare industry has a wide variety of positions, similar to the issue of healthcare assistants wanting to remain in client-facing roles another issue with career progression in homecare is that skills a healthcare assistant possess may not necessarily transfer to other roles.

The implementation of a plan that will introduce client facing promotions and office-based roles will assist in reducing the employee turnover number.

An Employee Assistance Programme offering employees guidance, support and counselling in managing work or personal issues will help support employees relatively inexpensively. Some providers in this field offer services for as low as €5.00 per employee per annum. The benefits of implementing programme like this for employees are increased engagement, lower stress levels and higher retentions rates (Uchida, 2007) and the services include support from qualified counsellors and experts in other areas including financial advisors, legal professionals.

8.2 Relevance of Data

Organisations operating in the Homecare industry in Ireland will be able to use this research and data to implement robust, practicable employee retention strategies that will increase the length of service of employees, help attract new candidates and capitalise on the increase in demand for their services safely (HSE, 2018).

By reducing employee turnover, in addition to increasing revenue through capitalising on opportunity for increased workload, organisations will also realise some investment savings. Recruitment costs in Homecare are significant, with estimates of between €200-€350 per application and between €1,200 to €1,800 per new recruit, an organisation with 1000 healthcare assistants and an employee turnover rate of 65% (HCCI, 2019) could spend €780,000 per annum just replacing their leavers.

In addition to these costs savings, other resources that were previously tied up in recruitment initiatives could be deployed to other value add projects.

As well as the initial benefits of employing a retention strategy based on this research, an organisation who retains its employees are also retaining and able to build on the existing skills and knowledge to deliver market leading services to their clients, as Eisenberger discovered in 2002, engaged, skilled and motivated employees will bring in more returns for a company, making it more profitable (Eisenberger, 2002).

8.3 Recommendations

8.3.1 Introduction

The research conducted has highlighted several issues within the homecare industry in Ireland that contribute to high employee turnover rates.

Many of the issues highlighted can be corrected with the right motivation and management's ability to adapt and change to a new way of working, one that can suit the organisation on a wider, deeper scale, not simply fire-fighting each day resolve that days or weeks issue. Correcting an issue like employee turnover will need an organisations management buy in from the board, CEO and all line managers within the organisation. Retaining employees must be one of the corporate objectives each and every year, and a practicable retention strategy should be created, implemented and audited in order to ensure consistence compliance.

Communication will be key in delivering a success strategy, the majority of respondents confirmed that communication improvements were required in their previous organisation.

The lack of clear retention strategies and policies to support this will not motivate teams towards achieving the set goals and objectives.

Work Life balance will continue to be a challenge for this industry, but there is more employers can to help improve this situation. Working hours defined by the needs of clients are inflexible, but how organisations arrange rosters and coordinate their people need not be inflexible, a need for innovative solutions in this aspect of an employees work life will contribute significantly to the satisfaction of employees (Roos, 2008) Employees that have the flexibility to deal with home life and maintain a social life will value the freedom and flexibility, particularly in an industry where most organisations cant budge on this.

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Inadequate compensation and benefits packages are a difficult aspect to resolve on such tight margins, ensuring consideration is given to this during the tender process, and annual budgeting will allow for more innovative solutions to resolve this. As Armstrong expressed in his book, employees who are remunerated well feel appreciated, like-wise, those that aren't feel unappreciated (Armstrong, 2012)..

8.3.2 Work Life Balance

There appear to be two streams of Work/Life Balance- flexibility and stability.

Depending on an employees lifestyle, an employee will appreciate or even require the need for one of these over the other, and finding a middle ground that suits organisations, clients and employees can be difficult. Taking a one-size fits all approach here is counter-intuitive. Organisations need to create multiple formats of employment and allow the employee to choose what suits them best.

A flexible contract will offer a high degree of flexibility, but a low degree of stability, particularly in rostered hours and potential income. A fixed hours contract will offer stability but not allow flexibility.

Having both of these options, as well as an ability to create a hybrid where employees can opt for either a flexible pattern or a fixed pattern of work for a period of time with enough notice may create a rostering headache, particularly when an organisation has over 2,000,000 hours of care to schedule each year, however, a hybrid will create a solution for employees that will keep them engaged with the organisation longer, and as their circumstances develop and change, they may appreciate a more stable pattern of work in the future, and reduce the need to create rosters for up to 650 new carers each year.

The introduction of more variations of employment contracts, and shift patterns will help increase job satisfaction and commitment (Qu, 2012) of the healthcare assistants.

8.3.3 Compensation and Benefits

A review compensation and benefits may be a the most impactful change that can be made to stem the flow of employees departing private providers in the homecare industry. However, we have previously discussed the challenges relating to this in terms of funding and commissioning of work. A new model has been proposed as part of Slaintecare (Slaintecare, 2021), which will see funding for homecare linked to a similar format as the fair deal scheme (HSE, 2018), in which the end user of the service, if they have the means, must contribute to the cost of their care delivery.

Based on these proposed changes, a new approach to tendering for homecare delivery as a partner of the Health Service Executive must be adopted.

Creating a PayScale system as implemented within the Health Service Executive, will create a remuneration package that will see employees receive a salary increase inline with their experience, qualifications and ability.

The introduction of a 5 point salary scale will increase costs significantly in terms of salary payments, however, these costs can be budgeted and included in future tender agreements. The additional costs could potentially be offset by the reduction in recruitment spend or the increase in revenue through creating a greater capacity to deliver more care safely.

This will also help create career progression plan for healthcare assistants to retain a client-facing role within the homecare industry.

8.3.4 Human Resources

Starting at the very beginning of the process, the organisation's missions and values must be clear for all potential candidates. Introducing this to the recruitment process will allow for the easy adoption of recruitment selection tools which utilises Schneiders ASA model (Schneider, 1987) and Cooman's P-O fit (Cooman, 2009) should be implemented to ensure organisations are recruiting the right candidates with the right values for their vacancies.

Introducing a mentoring programme that gives new entrants access to a mentor that has been trained to act as a mentor by the organisation, and act as an ambassador for their organisation, that is not their direct line manager and speak to someone experienced in the role of healthcare assistant and can offer advice and guidance on a wide variety of issues within their organisation.

Getting the right people in the right place and setting up professional supports such as a personalised induction programme and a mentor will help prepare new employees for their roles and help them navigate their first six months easily will help reduce the number of employees that leave the homecare industry within the first six months of their employment beginning.

In terms of ongoing support, introducing an Employee Assistance Programme that promotes wellness and provides employees with access to help, support and advice on a number of different points including dealing with stress, financial advice and in many cases free legal professional advice. Introducing an Employee Assistance Programme has been proven to alleviate stress and help engage employees with their employer (Uchida, 2007).

8.4 Future Research

Although the information gathered as part of this research, it only focused ex-employees in the homecare industry in Ireland and gave useful insight into the reasons employees left their roles as Healthcare Assistants, the researcher felt that more data could be obtained from current and long standing healthcare assistants around their decision to remain in their role.

Information gathered from this perspective may offer deeper insight and allow for the creation of more robust employee retention strategies.

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9.0 Reflective Statement

9.1 Introduction

This reflective statement will reflect upon the learnings and experience gained during this research project. This reflection will be structured to critically analyse the different learning experiences and skills developed during the process.

I will discuss my learning style, and how this was developed during the course of this research project and the skills I developed and improved as a result of having completed this research.

I will discuss and demonstrate the future application of these learnings, which will be useful beyond, university life, and into my future career.

The research project developed transferrable skills that will aid me in areas such as research, teamwork, organisation, decision making and communication.

9.2 Learning Style Theory

Kolb's learning theory (Kolb, 1984) highlighted four learning styles- Accommodating, Diverging, Converging and Assimilating, which he bases on a four-stage learning cycle.

The basis of the theory is that different people are prone to prefer a single learning style and that factors such as social interactions, education and personality influence a person's preferred style, and that regardless of the influences, the preferred learning style is based on two separate decisions. These decisions were presented as lines of axis, with conflicting ideas at either end, one based on emotion, or the other based on tasks. Kolb's theory indicates that a learner can only base their style of learning on a single axis at once i.e., think and feel.

In this theory, Kolb indicates that it's possible to develop weaknesses of each of the other elements and that a learner adapt to each stage of the cycle, and may have either conscious or sub conscious preferences for one or more of the stages over others.

By identifying our strengths and weaknesses, we can adopt a method that suits our own preference and to focus and strengthen any particular weaknesses within the other elements.

9.3 Self-Reflection While Researching

Based on Honey and Mumford's Learning Questionnaire (Honey, 1992), I am a reflector. Meaning that I learn best by observing and thinking. My learning preference is listening to lectures and demonstrations, researching and discussions.

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I learn best through experiences and observation, collecting and analysing data before reaching a conclusion.

With this knowledge and understanding of own preference and needs as a learner, I can adjust, adapt and develop my learning skills to ensure I can benefit from any learning situation.

As part of this research project, it allowed me to identify how I can apply my strengths and adapt to my weaknesses and apply different methods to ensure I get the most out of this learning and development experience.

Conducting the research element of this project has allowed me to utilise skills, experience and knowledge and understanding of theories built up over the course of the two years on this MBA and apply them practically to a real problem not just facing an organisation but a whole industry.

As new theories were introduced, discussed and critiqued each week, it gave both my interview, and research, new dimensions. It allowed me to develop a survey that provided relevant data to the issue, and critically analyse the results through the different theories discussed and learned during the course from a number of different perspectives.

9.4 Future Application of Learnings

The research project has given me a much wider perspective and helped me realise that in order to continue developing both professionally and personally, self-reflection and critical analysis of a situation will provide deeper insight and allow for better, more analytical decision making.

Completing the research element of the project has provided me with the knowledge of how to gather real time information on ideas and trends and how to analyse the data provided in the responses in a meaningful way.

This project has given me time to reflect on the interpersonal skills needed to allow me to be successful, including- adaptability, receptiveness, collaboration, innovative and critical thinking and problem solving. Identifying skills that will be needed in the future, and how to apply these to an industry and I work in, will be key to future success.

As well as the interpersonal skills, I have also developed hard research skills which will help in professionally, including- report writing, data collection, how to analyse information and planning.

The exposure to a real business issue, how to identify, gather data and create a strategy to combat the issue has given me the knowledge to make solid business judgments and the confidence to tackle complex business issues.

10.0 Declaration



Declaration

Submission of Dissertation

National College of Ireland

Research Students Declaration Form

(Author Declaration Form)

Name:

Derek Conway

Student Number:

X18131778

Degree for which thesis is submitted:

Masters in Business Administration

Material submitted for award

(a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself.

(b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

(c) My thesis will be included in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository TRAP (thesis reports and projects)

(d) Either

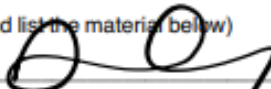
*I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

Or

*I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of _____

(State the award and the awarding body and list the material below)

Signature of research student:



Date:

18/8/21

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11.0 Acknowledgements

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13.0 Appendix

13.1 Survey

Healthcare Assistant Exit Survey

Employment Information

1. When did you begin employment as a Healthcare Assistant?

Date

2. For what duration were you employed as Healthcare Assistant?

- 0-3 months
- 4-6 months
- 7-12 months
- 13-24 months
- 2 Years
- 3 Years
- 4 Years
- 5 Years
- 6 Years +

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3. Geographically, where was your work based?

Carlow

Cavan

Clare

Cork

Donegal

Dublin

Galway

Kerry

Kildare

Kilkenny

Laois

Leitrim

Limerick

Longford

Louth

Mayo

Meath

Monaghan

Offaly

Roscommon

Sligo

Tipperary

Waterford

Westmeath

Wexford

Wicklow

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4. Were you aware of your company values when you started your position?

Yes

No

5. How satisfied were you in your role?

10

Recruitment Process

6. What attracted you to your role as a Healthcare Assistant?

7. How did you apply for this role?

- Indeed
- Facebook
- Friend Referral
- Face to Face
- Recruitment Fair
- Intreo
- Recruitment Poster
- Other (please specify)

8. Please rate your experience of the recruitment process you went through before becoming a Healthcare Assistant.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10

9. Were the role, responsibilities and duties made clear to you during the recruitment process?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

10. Did your job duties turn out to be as expected?

- Yes
- No

11. Were pay compensation and benefits, including hourly rates of pay, incentives and other benefits made clear during the recruitment process?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

Management and Supervision

12. Please rate the quality of the support that you received from your office team.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10

13. How would you rate the overall environment and atmosphere? (1 - extremely negative and unpleasant, and 10 - extremely positive and pleasant)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10

14. Is there anything your line manager could have done differently do improve his or her management style?

15. Did you receive sufficient and regular feedback about your performance?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

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16. How would you rate your relationship with your immediate manager?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10

17. Did this relationship impact your decision to leave your role as a Healthcare Assistant?

Yes

No

Work-Life Balance

18. How many hours per week where you rostered to work?

- 0-5 hours
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 30+

19. How many hours per week would you like to have been rostered to work?

- 0-5 hours
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- 26-30
- 30+

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20. If you worked less hours than what you would have preferred, did anyone from your organisation contact you to discuss your lack of hours?

21. Were you aware of the advertised contracted guaranteed minimum hours Healthcare Assistant roles some companies are advertising?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

22. Did you work less hours than what your contract stated?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

Learning and Development

23. Do you think the training and support received upon beginning your role as a healthcare assistant prepared you to do your job effectively?

Yes

No

24. How satisfied were you with the quality of the training that you received upon beginning your role as a healthcare assistant?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10

Human Resources

25. Did your position as a Healthcare Assistant provide a good work-life balance?

Yes

No

26. Would you recommend the role of Healthcare Assistant to your family and friends?

Yes

No

27. Did your company assist you in fulfilling your career goals?

Yes

No

28. Did your organisation have an Employee Assistance Programme in place?

Yes

No

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29. Have you been in touch with anyone from your HR Department?

- Yes
- No

30. Was the interaction with the HR Department useful?

- Yes
- No

Leaving your Role as a Healthcare Assistant

31. Of the below, what best describes your primary reason for leaving?

- Same Role- New Company
- Career Change
- Career Change Promotion
- Promotion- New Company
- Relationship with Line Manager
- Relationship with Local Office
- Role not as expected
- Role not as advertised
- Not enough hours
- Too many hours
- Too many phone calls
- Personal circumstances
- Education commitments
- Other (list reason)

32. Is there anything that you can think of, that your organisation could have done differently, that would have impacted your decision to leave?

33. What did you like most about working as a Healthcare Assistant?

34. If your employment as a Healthcare Assistant lasted 3 months or less, can you please give provide more detail on your decision to leave the role?

Client Relations

35. Did you consider your organisation to be a caring company?

Yes

No

36. Would you recommend your organisation as a provider of care to your friends and family?

Yes

No

37. How would you rate the relationships with your clients?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

38. Did these relationships impact your decision to leave?

Yes

No

39. Thank you for taking the time today. Is there anything else you would like to add that we should consider?